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TRENDS IN INTER-ARAB COOPERATION OVER THE NEXT DECADE
AND THE IMPLICATIONS FOR ISRAEL

NIE Working Paper

The following memorandum concentrates primarily on the Arab states in confrontation with Israel, as well as on the Palestinians and the key states on the periphery of the struggle. Because of the particular volatility of the area, the paper's conclusions must be considered extremely tentative--whether they apply to the period ten years from now or only to the next year. The memorandum, in fact, does not make firm judgments, in the belief that this is impossible over an extended period, but it does point to possible trends in Arab politics.

On the assumption that a peace settlement would obviate the need for this memorandum, the paper makes the implicit judgment that there will be no final negotiated settlement within the next decade. In a situation of peace that gave reasonable satisfaction to all parties, the topic of trends in inter-Arab cooperation would be essentially academic as

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far as the Arab-Israeli situation is concerned; inter-Arab cooperation would have little or no impact on Israel or on the Arab-Israeli balance of power. Although the political ramifications of a possible war are not treated explicitly, the memorandum's judgments on likely trends in the Arab world are not inconsistent with what might emerge in the aftermath of a war.

The memorandum does not discuss at length the Arabs' relations with major outside powers, their economic power, or their military strength. Although these are all issues that could have a bearing on the degree of Arab cooperation against Israel, all are the subjects of separate working papers and should be melded, it is felt, only in the full NIE draft.

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TRENDS IN INTER-ARAB COOPERATION OVER THE NEXT DECADE
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NIE Working Paper

For the more than 25 years of the Arab-Israeli struggle, the Arabs have found their political strength in their ability to unite at critical periods on this issue as on no other. This strength, and its adverse consequences for Israel, were most strikingly demonstrated in 1973, when the Arabs combined a military with a political and economic strategy that was able to draw in some degree on the material resources of all but a small number of the Arab states.

The second Sinai agreement has clearly weakened this Arab unity and sapped Arab political as well as military strength against Israel, at least for the near term. Some Israelis now take satisfaction in claiming that for the first time in their history they are the reason not for unity among the Arabs but for serious division. It is precisely this division in Arab ranks--a division that leaves Egypt temporarily neutralized and the other belligerents thereby weakened--that Prime Minister Rabin outlined in late 1974 as the first and most important step in Israel's strategy for the following seven years. Rabin's object: to gain time by numbing the Arabs while Israel's strength is augmented and the West's dependence on Arab oil diminishes.

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The Israeli strategy would seem to be succeeding admirably. Several questions arise, however, about the viability over the longer term of the Israelis' dependence on Arab division. How permanent, for instance, is the present division likely to be? How likely is it in fact that division among the Arabs will enhance Israel's security? How accurate is the apparently prevailing Israeli belief that time is on Israel's side and that advantage can be gained by feeding on and attempting to fuel Arab division? The answers to these questions will determine the prospects, if not for a negotiated settlement, at least for stability in the area over the next decade.

The Case for Arab Unity versus Division

The Israelis, not surprisingly, are somewhat narrow in their perceptions of the comparative advantages and disadvantages of Arab division versus Arab unity. There is no question that unity among the Arabs does cause trouble for Israel. Division, by the same token, does work to Israel's advantage--at least as the Israelis themselves see it in the short run. But what is good or bad in Israel's short-range terms is not necessarily also good or bad in terms of the long-run prospects for Middle East stability.

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Considered in this broader context, the situation is not so clear-cut or so easily defined in terms of Arab unity or division. Neither full Arab unity nor the complete division that Israel is seeking is ever likely in fact to bring stability, much less a peace settlement.

Before the 1973 war, the Arabs rarely exhibited, even in a loose sense, an effective, positive unity. Their solidarity was always a negative one--a united rejection of Israel, a united refusal to consider peace with Israel, a united refusal even to negotiate with Israel. An emotional and ideological outlook unified the Arabs in blind opposition to any compromises and made a peace settlement impossible.

At the same time, clear division among the Arabs is no more likely to facilitate a settlement than is unbending unity. The Arabs are so militarily and economically inter-dependent that, without a common purpose, they lose both military and political strength and, if the past is any precedent, tend to retreat in their weakness into increased radicalism. Moves toward a settlement by one Arab state that fail to offer hope to the others tend to increase the militancy of the dissatisfied and to swing Arab opinion in favor of the aggrieved. The net effect is to place increased pressure on the state that has left the fold, diminishing its willingness to maintain the separate policy that originally brought division.

Progress toward a peace settlement thus can be facilitated from the Arab side only if the Arabs exhibit a loose solidarity of purpose somewhere between the rigid unity that characterized their policy toward Israel in the past, and the complete fragmentation that Israel seems to desire. The Arabs achieved progress in negotiations following the 1973 war because they showed a reasonable degree of positive, purposeful unity but were able to temper this with tactical flexibility. Negotiations were facilitated precisely because the Arabs had a common strategic goal in mind but were not inhibited by a fully united and therefore binding view of the tactics to be pursued in achieving the goal.

The question thus most germane to the political aspects of the Arab-Israeli struggle over the next decade concerns the degree of inter-Arab cooperation that will prevail. The issue will be whether Egypt, Syria, and Jordan--the confrontation states--will continue to exhibit the relatively loose and flexible solidarity that has made progress in peace negotiations possible over the last two years; or whether they will revert to behavior typical of the past, when political inhibitions limited tactical flexibility and thus also the opportunity for serious negotiations. The attitudes and actions of the other key Arab parties, the Palestinians and the principal peripheral states like Saudi Arabia, will be a major factor in determining the actions of the belligerents.

The seeds both for continued independence of action on the one hand and for greater integration of actions and policies toward Israel on the other are already there. Egypt's engagement in separate negotiations is indicative of a trend toward pragmatic concentration on separate national, as opposed to pan-Arab, goals that is true to one degree or another of all Arab states. At the same time, Syria's move toward closer coordination with the Palestinians and Jordan in reaction to its frustration in negotiations is indicative of a lingering tendency to seek comfort in inhibiting political rigidity. The tug of war between these conflicting tendencies is likely to be the salient political feature in the Arab world as further attempts are made to negotiate an Arab-Israeli settlement, and the outcome will in large measure determine whether a settlement is possible.

The outcome over the long term will depend on a number of imponderables. The internal stability of the individual confrontation states and the domestic strength of their leaders will be important factors. Their actions toward Israel and toward each other will be heavily influenced by their ability to sustain domestically a foreign policy that allows for some compromise with Israel and for a tactical divergence from a rigidly unified Arab policy.

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The actions of key Arab states on the periphery of the Arab-Israeli struggle, such as Saudi Arabia and Algeria, as well as of the superpowers, will also be important. The confrontation states depend heavily on the financial largesse of the wealthy Arab oil states and on the arms aid of either the US or the Soviet Union, and their politics could be heavily influenced by the manipulation of economic or military assistance.

In the end, however, the Arab belligerents' inclination toward flexibility of action or toward greater unity and inflexibility will depend primarily on Israel's actions. Moderation in foreign policy--unemotional pragmatism that permits tactical compromise in pursuit of long-range strategic interests--is a fragile commodity in the Arab world, and it must be nurtured if it is to be given permanency. The Arabs as a rule have always been more comfortable with a politically rigid and rhetorically militant approach to foreign policy that made accommodation something to be feared. Despite a new diplomatic flexibility that has brought progress toward the accomplishment of Arab goals, the tendency has not been institutionalized. It will be institutionalized only if the Arabs see that pragmatism and flexibility are demonstrably productive policies, and only Israel, and with it the US, can make this demonstration.

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The Domestic Situation as a Factor

There is perhaps no riskier undertaking in the business of political prediction than speculating on a country's ability over an extended period to maintain domestic stability. This is particularly difficult in the Arab world, where leadership is personalized, political institutions are not fully developed, and provision for orderly succession is often haphazard.

While there is no reason at present to predict upheaval in any of the Arab confrontation states or the key peripheral states, it is impossible to speak with any certainty about domestic trends in these countries over the next ten years. Egypt, for instance, has enjoyed stability for almost a quarter century, but there are enough signs of discontent with the government to make a prediction of ten more years of stability risky. President Sadat can in any case legally remain in office for only another six years at maximum, and there is no obvious and generally acceptable heir apparent. In Syria, President Asad has brought the most extended period of stability that country has enjoyed since independence 30 years ago, but Syria's heritage of coups makes its recent period of stability a fragile basis on which to predict a decade more of domestic peace.

Jordan and Saudi Arabia, as two among only a handful of functioning monarchies remaining in the world, are anachronisms and thus particularly vulnerable, despite decades of stability, to revolutionary upheaval. The Palestinians are already in such disarray and are so much at the mercy of their Arab government sponsors that any attempt to predict the temper of the movement--whether it evolves into a legally constituted government or a government-in-exile, or remains a resistance organization--ten years hence is virtually meaningless. Lebanon, never before an important factor in the Arab-Israeli equation, is in the process of profound change. Instability, of a sort that will have some impact on the Arab-Israeli situation, is a near certainty, but neither the future make-up of the government nor its political coloration can be predicted with any assurance.

The individual domestic situations in the key Arab countries are thus a murky area in any look into the mid-1980s. Yet the domestic picture will have a profound impact on the tone of inter-Arab relations in the decade ahead and ultimately on the course of Arab-Israeli negotiations. Even leaders of basically similar viewpoints but of differing styles will alter the equation. A Sadat in Syria, for instance, might already have made more negotiating progress possible on the

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Syrian front. An Asad at the head of the Palestinian movement might have been better able to unify the movement and bring it to a more openly accommodating stance. An Arafat at the helm in Jordan would probably have altered the course of the 1973 war and would undoubtedly have changed the negotiating equation as far as both the Arabs and the Israelis are concerned. Any current leader but Sadat would probably have hesitated to bring Egypt as far as it has come on an independent negotiating path.

It is virtually certain that no combination of Arab leaders in the key states will ever achieve the degree of unity against Israel that the Arabs themselves dream of. Indeed, if there has been a trend among the Arabs in one direction or another over the last several years, this has been in the opposite direction--toward greater separateness. As the Arab revolutionaries of the 1950s and 1960s have gained legitimacy and settled into the role of relatively stable governing establishments, and as these governments have turned increasing attention to internal economic development, a tendency has grown among them to look inward toward the advancement of individual national interests. They have increasingly used foreign policy as an instrument for furthering those interests rather than primarily as a shield for domestic weakness, thus espousing a policy that is more pragmatic than emotional, more responsible than adventurist.

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This trend toward greater concentration on domestic priorities has been at the expense of previous Arab striving toward pan-Arab unity and at the expense, in some measure, of a unified Arab strategy against Israel. A desire for domestic economic reconstruction explains Egypt's adoption of a relatively independent negotiating strategy. A similar domestic goal motivates Syria's continued desire for a negotiated settlement with Israel and would, if the Syrians saw hope for progress on this path, motivate a continued adherence to separate negotiations not tied, at least in the interim stages, to Palestinian negotiating aims. In a subtle way, domestic priorities in the states on the periphery of the Arab-Israeli conflict have served to divert attention from what was formerly the single policy issue that animated all Arabs. The confrontation states' maneuverability has thereby been increased, lessening pressure on them to act only within the constraints of a rigid pan-Arab policy that allowed little room for compromise or difference of tactics.

To say that the Arabs are now more interested in furthering domestic rather than pan-Arab goals is not to say, however, that they have rid themselves of an emotional commitment to the struggle with Israel and particularly to the Palestinian cause or that they are so completely dedicated to their separate national goals that they are willing or able to pursue totally independent paths in pursuit of separate peace settlements with Israel.

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Indeed, precisely the same concentration on domestic priorities that has given the Arab states some room for individuality also prevents them from being totally independent of each other. President Sadat's almost single-minded purpose is to develop Egypt economically, but to do this he must achieve a durable and honorable peace and at the same time attract the financial assistance of the wealthy oil states in the Arab world. The two goals are compatible only if his idea of peace also satisfies the demands of the other Arabs and specifically of the oil states--Saudi Arabia chief among them. Egypt cannot, in short, afford economically to settle for an Egyptian-Israeli peace. A settlement that did not satisfy all of the confrontation states, as well as the Palestinians and Saudi Arabia, would very probably result in a cut-off of vital economic assistance and thus undermine the very economic progress that is Egypt's prime reason for seeking peace.

Similar domestic constraints would deter the other confrontation states as well from pursuing a totally separate negotiating path, and Syria would be held back by the additional fact of its particular emotional and ideological commitment to the Palestinian cause. In the case of peripheral states like Saudi Arabia, domestic concerns of an entirely different nature dictate a continued solidarity with the

mainstream of the Arab cause. For the very reason that Saudi Arabia is a conservative monarchy with vast oil wealth for the taking in any power grab, its identification with the Arab cause is a matter of self-preservation. While a strong element of genuine dedication to the struggle against Israel governs Saudi solidarity with the Arabs, this is also in no small measure governed by a desire to deny an issue to potential domestic malcontents and outside agitators who might readily stir up opposition if the Saudis withheld their economic weapons from the Arab struggle.

It is in determining the precise extent of inter-Arab cooperation over the next decade--the precise balance between the tendency toward independence on the one hand and the inclination toward continued solidarity on the other--that the future domestic stability of the key countries will be critical. It is probably not inaccurate to predict that, as a general rule, a continuation of the current generally stable atmosphere in the principal countries will contribute to greater tactical flexibility among the Arabs in their dealings with each other and with Israel. By the same token, increased instability in one or more countries would probably have an inhibiting effect on Arab policy. Without necessarily leading to real inter-Arab cooperation or solidarity, instability could so limit the maneuverability of the separate

states that the Arabs would in effect act as a unit, at least as far as Israel was concerned.

It is not difficult to foresee, for instance, a situation in which Syrian President Asad, who has shown himself to be relatively independent of Baathist ideological pressures, is overthrown and replaced by a leader able to retain his position only by bowing to hard-line Baathist pressures. In these circumstances, Syria could reject the idea of negotiations with Israel, portray itself as the only true defender of the Arab and particularly the Palestinian cause, and adopt a generally more militant approach that would have a ripple effect throughout the Arab world. Syrian militancy would almost certainly remove from Palestinian minds any thought of compromise with Israel; other Arab states like Algeria and Kuwait that consider themselves champions of Palestinian interests would hesitate to continue support for the concept of negotiations; even Saudi Arabia would find it difficult actively to oppose the Syrian-Palestinian position; and Egypt, left without even tacit support for its policy, would be hard-pressed to remain on the negotiating track itself.

Perhaps somewhat more likely than upheaval in Syria is upheaval in Jordan, although this is certainly not predictable at this stage. Simply because it is a monarchy, Jordan is

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vulnerable to change--more so than its sister monarchy, Saudi Arabia, which has the economic strength to buy off many potential external opponents and to solve economic problems at home that could otherwise be a cause for domestic discontent. Jordan has not yet fully coped with the economic grievances that were partially the cause of an army mutiny at a base near Amman in early 1974, and the possibility that some military group might attempt a coup cannot be ruled out if economic problems continue to fester. Jordan is also a target of subversion because of its anti-fedayeen policies. An overthrow of King Husayn could, if it brought to power a pro-Palestinian or any other type of radical regime, significantly alter the Arab political line-up, inducing a greater degree of cohesiveness and possibly a trend toward increased inflexibility in peace negotiations.

Other similar scenarios can be postulated, all leading generally to the same conclusion. Throughout the third world, adventurism in foreign policy has as a rule been the province of newly established and usually internally weak leaders who use confrontation to hide weakness at home or to divert popular attention from domestic problems. Instability in the key Arab states in the years ahead could well bring an end to the generally responsible foreign policies pursued over the past few years, and negotiations with Israel would most likely be

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the first victim of an increased Arab tendency toward confrontation policies. Israel would be, as it has been in the past, the chief scapegoat for internal weaknesses in the Arab countries. And any Arab state that continued to negotiate with Israel would find itself seriously isolated and very probably unable to pursue a policy of accommodation.

Lebanon--A Special Case

Lebanon is fast becoming a new element in the Arab-Israeli equation and one where the domestic situation could have a telling impact on inter-Arab and on Arab-Israeli relations. Although Lebanon may experience prolonged periods of civil strife, it seems entirely possible that in ten years' time the country will have achieved a measure of internal stability under a predominantly Muslim government. On the face of it, Israel would regard such an eventuality extremely negatively, fearing that creation of a Muslim Lebanon would further stack the Arab deck against Israel, add another potential combatant on its border, and lead to increased fedayeen cross-border raids into Israel. There seems little question in fact that, in the event of another war, a Muslim Lebanon would confront Israel with the need to fight on an additional front. It is likely in addition that there would be some increase in fedayeen raids as the Palestinians were given more freedom of movement in southern Lebanon.

At the same time, however, it seems reasonable to assume that the geographical position of Lebanon and domestic exigencies would dictate some restraint in its actions toward Israel. Any Muslim government would very likely serve with the blessing, and at least to some extent at the sufferance, of Syria and could thus be expected to follow closely Syria's policies toward Israel; so long as these were restrained, restraint from Lebanon could also be anticipated. Some caution would be dictated for domestic reasons as well. Lebanon would still have a substantial and influential Christian minority that would probably exert some pressure to maintain the country's non-involvement in the Arab-Israeli dispute. Even radical leaders, moreover, having already all too often tasted Israeli retaliation for fedayeen raids, would probably not lightly give a go-ahead for unlimited guerrilla attacks from Lebanese territory.

The Psychology of Arabism

Domestic factors cannot be considered in isolation as the sole determinant of an Arab country's actions and its foreign policies. The simple fact of being "an Arab" exerts a subtle, and to the Western mind an often unfathomable, psychological pressure for solidarity with other Arabs that no amount of domestic stability or political sophistication is

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ever likely to alter completely. Despite a well-deserved reputation for fragmentation and disunity, despite political in-fighting and even internecine war, the Arabs have through the years shown a remarkable capacity for patching up differences when an issue of Arab-wide interest--usually Israel--requires this, and for almost paternalistically looking out for the interests of the Arab "underdog"--lately the Palestinians. It is difficult to foresee the day when an Arab government, regardless of its domestic stability or its freedom from economic dependence on other Arab countries, would so totally espouse an independent policy or so totally turn aside from the emotional pull of being one with the Arabs, as to separate itself completely from Arab ranks.

Even President Sadat, the leader probably most inclined in this direction, would very probably stop short of totally divorcing Egypt from the Arab cause even if he had the economic resources to do so. Although it is considerably less intense than in most other Arab countries, there is an emotional attachment to the Palestinians among Egyptians that would prevent Sadat from pursuing a total estrangement. He is himself emotionally bound to the Arab cause. Furthermore, Sadat would not lightly throw off the leadership of the Arab world that continued commitment to the cause brings Egypt.

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He is an "Egypt-firster," as many have described him, but part of his vision for Egypt involves furthering its interests precisely by maintaining its primacy among the Arab states, and Sadat has gone about as far as he can safely go in pursuit of an independent policy without seriously undermining that primacy.

There seems little question that no other Arab leader, in Egypt or in any other key country, would move farther from the Arab fold than Sadat has done. King Husayn attempted it in the early 1970s, but this brought Jordan nothing in terms of negotiations with Israel and in fact resulted in a net loss in both political and economic terms. In reaction, Husayn has over the last year moved Jordan back into, rather than farther away from, the Arab fold.

The Arabs are to a considerable extent inter-dependent--emotionally no less than economically or militarily--and, despite vast differences among them, they are irrevocably bound together by one fact: they are all Arabs. They have a common pride in their heritage, their language and, lately, their political accomplishments in the international arena, and it is a matter of public shame and considerable political risk to stray too far from the fold.

This emotional inter-dependence will be a major factor in the years ahead in keeping the Arabs together in at least

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the loose solidarity that has characterized their relations over the last two years. The key states will play on emotions to prevent serious deviation from Arab strategic goals. Even the Arab League will be an important factor. Although essentially powerless and itself no more than a reflection of the separate states, the Arab League simply by its existence is a unifying force. It is the institutional manifestation of inter-Arab cooperation and, if nothing else, it provides a forum for coordination and forces on the Arabs the need for at least occasional consultation.

Among the individual Arab states, Syria could, so long as it remains dissatisfied with the progress of negotiations, play a major role in maintaining Arab solidarity through emotional appeals against any tendency toward divergence from the Arab cause. Although Syria, no less than Egypt, wants a peace settlement in order to facilitate economic development, it has a stronger emotional commitment to the Palestinians and is less inclined to place its own economic interests above the unity of the cause. By virtue of its close ties to the Palestinians, Syria has the capability to rally a majority of the Arab states to support of a more militant position toward Israel and, while this is not its natural inclination, it would do so if it obtained no satisfaction from its willingness to negotiate with Israel.

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No Arab country wants to appear to be turning its back on the Palestinians, and the Arab country that most loudly champions the Palestinian cause on the grounds that Palestinian interests are being ignored can succeed in winning a large measure of Arab sympathy to its side. Syria is attempting this in the present situation. One of its chief objects in maintaining its steady criticism of Egypt for signing the second Sinai agreement is to win support and to prevent the Arabs from supporting Egypt's position. The Syrians have not fully succeeded; most Arabs are not convinced, despite their growing doubts about Egypt's intentions, that Cairo has permanently abandoned the Arab or the Palestinian cause, as Syria charges. But Damascus has successfully played on these doubts and on the emotionalism of the issue to prevent any Arab from openly backing Egypt or from speaking out against the Syrian position.

By allying itself with the Palestinians, Syria has guaranteed the purity of its Arab credentials, and no other Arab is willing to appear any less true to the cause. Should the day ever come that Syria is so dissatisfied with the pace and course of negotiations that it rejects the concept of negotiations altogether, it would undoubtedly be able to take large numbers of the other Arabs with it in a unified policy opposing accommodation with Israel, and the position of those still desiring talks would be untenable.

Saudi Arabia could also be a force for Arab solidarity in future years, although the fact that it is more politically conservative than the other Arab states and better able economically to be independent will place some limits on this solidarity. The Saudis' conservative policies on the one hand and their desire on the other to exhibit their credentials as Arabs in good standing exert opposing pressures on them, and their prime interest lies in ensuring the kind of inter-Arab cooperation along a course of relative moderation that will enable them to avoid taking sides. The Saudis have good relations with the current leaderships of Egypt on one side and of Syria and the less radical Palestinians on the other. It is in their interest to maintain these relations and, if possible, to heal the rift. The Saudis find themselves in an awkward position, caught between Egypt, whose moderate policies they support, and Syria, whose appeals for sympathy and support they find both genuinely compelling and impolitic to turn aside if they too are not to be branded as traitors along with Egypt.

The Saudis' natural inclination in this situation is, and will be in similar situations in the future, to attempt to limit the danger to their own position by mediating an end to the dispute if this is possible. They can in fact exert a moderating influence and, so long as there is any

remaining hope for a negotiated settlement, their influence will assist in keeping Syria and the Palestinians on the negotiating track. The Saudis are not, however, either persevering mediators or decisive advocates for any position, and they will not long or forcefully oppose the tide of Arab opinion, even if this runs counter to their own instincts. They would not necessarily give active support to a more militantly anti-Israeli position among the Arabs, but they would probably also not actively oppose it.

The Saudis would act with somewhat greater forcefulness if a leftward trend developed among the Arabs that was a matter of fundamental political philosophy rather than primarily of anti-Israeli militancy. And in this case their influence might be more telling. The Saudis still have vivid memories of the days when the leftist policies of the so-called progressives made Saudi Arabia the pariah of the Arab world and the victim of attempts at subversion. They do not want a repeat of that situation, and they would use all their resources to prevent it. Their counsels of moderation might go unheeded, but their financial resources could prove an effective instrument; whereas the Saudis would be unlikely to cut off aid to Syria or the Palestinians for an increasingly radical position against Israel, they would probably not hesitate to terminate aid to any state that turned significantly to the left politically. Their aid is of critical

importance to the confrontation states, and these states would think twice before risking its cessation.

Israel's Policies--The Key to Arab Pragmatism

No single factor will be as important in determining the degree of Arab solidarity and the flexibility or inflexibility of Arab policies in the future as Israel's own actions. No amount of domestic strength, of independence from Arab doles, of unemotional pragmatism in policy-making, or of Saudi recommendations for moderation will keep the Arabs from uniting in a rigid policy toward negotiations if Israel does not give the Arabs a return for their readiness to negotiate.

Pragmatism and the give-and-take of negotiations are still unfamiliar concepts to the Arabs, and there remains a strong emotional resistance to making concessions to Israel. This has lately been evidenced by the Syrians' and the Palestinians' horrified reaction to Egypt's concessions in the Sinai agreement and by Egypt's own insistence that it in fact made no concessions. That the Arabs have engaged in negotiations at all is entirely a function of two factors: the increased self-confidence that pride in their military accomplishments in 1973 has given them, and the fact that it has been demonstrated by the US and Israel through three

rounds of disengagement negotiations that flexibility can bring tangible benefits in the form of territory returned. If those tangible benefits no longer appear to be forthcoming, not only will Arab self-confidence be sapped, thus heightening their inhibitions about negotiations, but they will be convinced that in fact flexibility on their part does not pay off.

The Arabs still feel more comfortable with a policy that is rigid and rhetorically militant, and they will retreat to the comfortable if the unfamiliar does not produce results. Only Israel can maintain Arab flexibility by demonstrating that this is a productive policy; only Israel, by making territorial concessions itself, can prevent the Arabs from returning to the unified, uncompromising Arab policy that would make a peace settlement impossible.

Conclusion

In many ways, the Arabs are today closer together in their policies and firmer in their solidarity of purpose than was true in the 1950s and 1960s when actual unity was their avowed aim. Differences of political system are to a large extent tolerated; attempts at subversion against Arab countries of differing political outlooks are minimal, and the "reactionary" regimes are accepted as members in good standing of

the Arab fold by the so-called progressive regimes. Saudi Arabia is an active and revered participant in Arab affairs, and even Jordan, despite the fact that it is a monarchy and anti-fedayeen at that, is now a respectable member of the brotherhood.

The trend toward greater cooperation is a matter of self-interest; although it is dictated in some measure by an emotional desire for the appearance of unity in the face of Israel's challenge, today's brand of inter-Arab cooperation is based primarily on practical considerations. The Arabs are in fact heavily inter-dependent, militarily, economically, and politically.

By an accident of fate their resources are scattered in such a way as to make it virtually impossible for any one state to act with complete independence against the wishes of the others. Egypt and Syria need each other militarily and politically to pose a credible military threat to Israel. Both need the financial largesse of Saudi Arabia for their own economic well-being, and the Saudi oil weapon is critical to the success of their politico-military strategy against Israel. Saudi Arabia, in its turn, needs good relations with the confrontation states and the Palestinians if it is to maintain its influence in Arab councils and its credibility as a good Arab. Jordan needs the friendship of either Egypt

or Syria as protection against the slings and arrows of other Arabs who oppose its Palestinian policy, and, in the normal course of Arab relations, either Syria or Egypt is usually seeking Jordan's friendship to protect its flanks against criticism from the other. The Palestinians are totally at the mercy of the other Arabs--whether of Lebanon for the haven it provides, of Syria and Egypt for political sustenance, or of Saudi Arabia and other oil states for financial support.

The very fact of this inter-dependence, and its practical grounding, make it an enduring phenomenon. It is likely that there will never be major Arab-Israeli war in which the resources of most Arab states are not called into service in some measure. It is equally likely that there will never be an Arab-Israeli peace that does not give reasonable satisfaction to all the Arab principals and have at least the implicit blessing of the main peripheral states. The Arabs are now--and are likely to be for the foreseeable future--militarily, economically, and emotionally incapable of making peace or war with Israel individually.

The principal danger for the future is that what is now a loose and flexible sort of practical cooperation that permits tactical divergences from the Arabs' overall strategic goals

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will be transformed into the rigid, undeviating refusal to consider flexibility that characterized the Arabs' policy toward Israel in the past. A tendency toward self-interested pursuit of separate national goals--the kind of tactical individuality that can facilitate peace negotiations--is now prevalent in the Arab world. But there are also signs, in Syria's stiffening demands, of a return to the kind of tactical rigidity and united approach to the Arab-Israeli problem that could make fruitful negotiations impossible.

The tendency toward a degree of self-interested independence and separateness can be nurtured only if the one issue that unites the Arabs is removed as a focus for their common attention. That issue is Israel's occupation of Arab territories, and by continuing its hold on those territories Israel itself gives the Arabs a cause for unity and solidarity that they would not otherwise have. A decade hence the Arabs will be better educated, more sophisticated, probably economically more powerful, and undoubtedly militarily stronger than they are now. If peace has not been achieved, they are likely also to be more emotionally determined to achieve it their way, and they will not hesitate to concentrate their resources on their common antagonist.

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